

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 SAM-01 /081 W

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R 101533Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0749

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: GOF MAJORITY WINS LEGISLATIVE BY-ELECTION

SUMMARY: JEAN ROYER, DEPUTY/MAYOR OF TOURS, STREAM-ROLLED ALL OPPOSITION IN A LEGISLATIVE BY-ELECTION HELD ON MAY 9. THOUGH A SECOND-ROUND RUN-OFF WAS GENERALLY EXPECTED BY MOST OBSERVERS, ROYER WON HANDILY IN THE FIRST ROUND. THE COMMUNISTS AND THE CENTER WERE THE MAIN LOOSERS; THE PS ONCE AGAIN SHOWED AN ADVANCE. IT WOULD BE SPECULATIVE TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS FOR THE FUTURE IN THIS ELECTION WHERE PERSONALITY PLAYED SUCH A STRONG ROLE. END SUMMARY.

1. MAYOR OF TOURS AND INDEPENDENT DEPUTY FROM THE INDRE-ET-LOIRE, JEAN ROYER WON HANDS DOWN IN A LEGISLATIVE BY-ELECTION HELD ON MAY 9. ROYER'S SUPPLEANT, HIS REPLACEMENT NAMED WHEN ROYER WAS APPOINTED MINISTER IN APRIL 1974, STEPPED DOWN, LEAVING THE ASSEMBLY SEAT

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OPEN. TAKING MORE THAN 56 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, ROYER

SHOWED A 5 PERCENT INCREASE OVER THE 51.2 PERCENT HE ACQUIRED IN THE 1973 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. THE LOSERS IN THE ELECTION WERE THE COMMUNISTS, DOWN TO 18 PERCENT FROM 19 PERCENT IN 1971. THE PS, WHICH HAS BEEN RISING STEADILY SINCE 1968, TOOK 21.5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, 3.5 PERCENT HIGHER THAN IN 1973. ABSTENTIONS WERE HIGH, 37 PERCENT AS OPPOSED TO 23 PERCENT IN 1973. OPPOSITION PARTIES SENT THEIR BIG GUNS DOWN TO CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE CANDIDATES, BUT IT WAS TO NO AVAIL.

2. ROYER WAS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN 1974, GETTING 3.2 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OLD, MAYOR OF TOURS SINCE 1959, ROYER IS A LAW-AND-ORDER MAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL, WELL KNOWN FOR HIS IMPLACABLE HARD STAND AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY AND PROSTITUTION. CALLED SAVONAROLA BY SOME, HE IS REPORTEDLY RELIGIOUS TO THE POINT OF ASCETICISM, AND HIS HUMORLESS AUSTERITY HAS MADE HIM THE BUTT OF MUCH CRITICISM. WITHIN HIS CIRCUMSCRIPTION, HOWEVER, HE REMAINS THE CHAMPION OF THE LITTLE MAN, SHOPKEEPERS AND LABORERS ALIKE. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT DESPITE HIS CONTROVERSIAL CHARACTER (OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF IT), HE WAS REELECTED MAYOR IN 1971 WITH ONE OF THE HIGHEST MARGINS IN FRANCE, 76 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

3. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF THE HEATED-UP POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN FRANCE, THE ELECTION HAS PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE. FOR THE PCF, FOR WHOM TOURS WAS A CLASSIC STRONGHOLD, IT IS ITS FIRST ELECTION SINCE FORMALLY DROPPING THE DOGMA OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT IN APRIL OF THIS YEAR. PARTY LEADERS WHO WERE ADVERSE TO THE IDEA MAY BE READING THE TOURS RESULTS AS PROOF THAT THE PCF MAY HAVE MOVED TOO FAR RIGHT. FOR THE PS, IT IS ONE MORE GAIN FOLLOWING ON THE ALREADY IMPRESSIVE

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ONES REGISTERED IN THE MARCH CANTONAL ELECTIONS. IN THE UDR (GAULLISTS) AND THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTIES, IT WILL GIVE A BOOST TO THOSE FAVORING THE IDEA OF RUNNING ALL CANDIDATES IN THE 1978 LEGISLATIVES ON THE "PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY" TICKET, AS DID ROYER. THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY IS PARTICULARLY HEARTENED BY ROYER'S WIN, IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT FEW COMMENTATORS PREDICTED A FIRST-ROUND VICTORY BY ROYER. FOR THE CENTRISTS, WHO ALSO SENT THEIR HEAVIES TO CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR CANDIDATE, IT MUST BE A BITTER LESSON, UNDERSCORING THE POINT LEARNED AT CHATELLERAULT IN OCTOBER 1975 (PARIS 27254): THAT THEY ARE THE MAJOR VICTIMS OF A HARDENING OF THE POLITICAL SCENE INTO A CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE LEFT AND RIGHT. IN FACT, VOTES PICKED UP BY ROYER MOST LIKELY CAME FROM THE CENTER.

4. PREDICTIONS FOR THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STILL HIGHLY SPECULATIVE. IN THE CASE OF TOURS, PERSONALITY WAS NO DOUBT ONE OF ROYER'S STRONGEST ASSETS. SUCH WILL BE THE CASE FOR HIM AND MANY OTHERS IN THE 1977 MUNICIPAL AND 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, AND PRE-ELECTION HEAD COUNTS AND POLLS CANNOT FULLY TAKE THIS INTO CONSIDERATION.
GAMMON

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